1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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and singing, playing and listening to music, eating festively, drinking rice beer, and implicitly sexual activity; in practice, these are the activities characteristic of a Santal festival. When a traditional and typically uneducated Santal meets another from a distant region, one of the first questions asked will be, "How is pleasure in your region?" The reply will focus on the activities mentioned above. Indeed, the only occasion in which I observed a fully sober Santal male adult burst into tears was during such a festive event. When I asked the old man why he was weeping at such a time, he replied, "The sounds of the drum remind me of the pleasure of my youth and of my deceased wife who shared in my pleasure." It will be recalled that it was rice beer which enabled the propagation of the Santal to proceed in the beginning of things, and if there is one word which is more frequently uttered than any other, more frequent even than the sound of festive drums, it is the cry of "*haṇḍi, haṇḍi haṇḍi*" (rice beer; from *handia*, Hindi = an earthenware container). As the Santal sing:

> Oh "flower friend"*
> I am thirsty and I am hungry;
> But hearing the sound of the drums under the canopy†
> My thirst and hunger are banished.

The Santal pleasure complex is of primary importance in considering recent economic and political events, but here the concern is with "pleasure" as a shared understanding serving the solidarity of the Santal. As the Santal think of it, "pleasure"

* A "flower friend" or *phul* (as in Hindi *phul* = flower) is a formally celebrated ritual friendship.

† The "canopy" or *chamda* is utilized in wedding ceremonies to cover the area in which the ceremony takes place.

n. About pride.

Sensible people do not feel proud. Only stupid people swell up like frogs; all feel disgust for such people. People who were paupers and have become a little well-to-do, or who have acquired a position for themselves by dishonest means, the conceit of such people quickly rises up. People say: "If a servant girl becomes the wife of the village headman, and a servant becomes an overchief, their conceit will not go even on twelve carts". This has been seen from time to time. A few Godet men have in the country deprived village headmen or overchiefs of their position; these mostly swell like boils; among them some are utterly covetous, and their women also scoff at poor people. 557 577 [539]

Thinking they look nice some girls let themselves be praised like a Paradise Flycatcher bird, although they are looking like an owl; they are giving themselves airs.

o. About mocking people.

Santals cannot endure mocking; it pains them very much, and it makes them awfully angry. They will rather stand upbraiding and rebuking words; mocking words they feel itching like the etka[10]. Men do not mock much; women speak vituperatingly to give people pain; they speak very irritatingly, they may make you vexed. Through women's mocking much quarrelling is caused, and thereby people are separated, they are even divorced. 152 578

p. About getting angry and sulky.

Santals do not, like the Dekos and the Turks, become quickly angry; still they become angry when they are much hurt. The men especially get angry, and at such times they are quick to strike; the women become sulky; they quickly become cross and sullen. If you ask them anything at such time, they snarl, and when you say anything to them, they snap at you, as if they were burning you with a nettle. Both elderly women and girls are such. The anger of men is easily appeased; but the sulkiness of women is assuaged only when you coax them a good deal; therefore the women break people in, without needing a training yoke. 152

q. About passionate and irascible speech.

Some men are, when angry, unable to restrain their rage; therefore when people say something to them, they speak passionately to them; but when a woman has become sulky, she will speak irascibly to you, even when you talk friendly to her. The passionate word of a man will glance off like a blunt arrow with a bamboo head; but the rage of a woman is as when your shoulder-blade is shot through with an iron arrowhead.

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[10] Mucuna pruriens, DC., has hairs that cause an unbearable itching.

[11] Oslo Etn. Mus. Budding.

2: Skrefarud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

f. About harbouring suspicion.

178 577 Formerly we had it very strict orderly, and the Santals also had a healthy fear of what is right; therefore men did not look at another man's wife. If they seduced the wife of another man, the woman's husband would cut them down; therefore there was no need of being suspicious. But nowadays there is no strict order; to cut people down they have also given up, and the Santals are also becoming very licentious; therefore people have no feeling of security; men and women suspect each other; there is no happiness at home. Nowadays they are also suspicious without cause, mostly so the women. As soon as a man looks at a girl or a married woman, his wife will at once accuse him; in this way much quarrel arises, and on account of this they also beat each other a good deal. Worried by the woman good husbands have also, in anger, got themselves co-wives.

g. About envy, and malice.

From olden times the Santals have been envying each other; but nowadays it is becoming more common. Men do not harbour much envy; mostly when in their youth some girl, being unwilling to agree to them, is married to some other young man, then they feel envy. Women are awfully envious. When they see others better off than themselves, they envy these; they feel envy towards those whom they suspect. They are envious towards those who look nicer than themselves; against men who will not marry them, they feel malice, and because of this malice they learn witchcraft and "eat" them, or if they do not "eat" them, they will "eat" the girl whom they are going to marry, and the envy of the wives of brothers destroys and maimes like leprosy. Half of the mutual complaints and fining that we have, have their origin in envy and malice, because the women do not only feel envy; they "eat", and they also set their husbands and relatives aflame by their talk; and the whole village is reduced to ashes.

h. About hating and taking revenge.

• 152 Santals do not much harbour hate; rather they get angry and furious; such anger will not, however, last a long time.

People who hate do not let their inner anger show; rather they speak sweetly to you; still they will not leave you, until they have done for you. Women especially harbour hate; like the fire in a warming-pan their mind is burning smouldering; and only when they get revenge, then only their mind cools down. Like snakes they bite when it is dark; you will never know anything, until the poison has taken effect in you.

i. About buying and selling.

178 433 436 262 In a former age there was no money, it is told, neither was there any buying and selling. All necessaries they were earning or making. For cooked food they had the millets iri, gundli, leyo, erha, and janha, further maize, bajra, and paddy, and for curry the

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

One scrutinising the attendant marriage ceremonials must be struck by the fact that many of them aim at the union of the souls of the married couple along with their physical bodies. The tying of the ends of the cloths worn by the husband and the wife and their eating together, are instances on the point. Something more than this is sought after to ensure the steadfast obedience of the wife to the husband when the former eats a meal soaked in the water with which her husband's feet have been washed. 585 182

The same anxiety for the future welfare of the married couple is revealed in processes to guard the luck, and to exclude the evil omens, as by the beneficent and luck-conferring virtues of the mango-twigs in a water-pot. And we must not forget that omen-reading is the first essential of all Santal marriages. In this respect, they go so far as to marry the parties to dogs or trees to do away with the supposed evil effects of their teeth having appeared earlier in the upper gum. Nor must we overlook the fact that the married couple not only belong to each other but to the wider life of the clan and the tribe. This communion of the bride with her husband's people is ensured by the girl offering rice-beer and tooth-sticks to the bridegroom's party. And by ceremonial baths and anointing the body with turmeric paste, the Santals [777] [152] [783] [824] [787] [588] [783]

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

533 539 825 In the following poem a boy is pressing his mother to tame a pair of birds:—

Buruccetanre kadañ gupi,
Sugasara cenrcniñ ciàakat' kin
Cara bànuk' babu, ţena bànuk.'
Sugà-sara cènrèn bàbulañ cekakinà.
Carayo iñgiñ àgui, tenayo iñgiñ benao.
Enrehon, sugà-sara cènţenyolañ àsulkinge.

(Translation)

Boy sings:

O mother,
While I was grazing buffaloes on the top of the hill,
I saw a pair of *Suk-sari* birds (there).

The mother replies:

We have no food to give them, no cage to keep them.
What shall we do with the birds, O my son!

Boy sings again:

I myself will bring food and make myself the cage (for them).
Yet, O mother, we shall rear them.

Other Songs

821 152 As an agricultural people, the hopes and fears of the Santals are knit up with the freaks of weather.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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584 and about twenty percent result from love or capture.

593 The average Santal remains madly in love with his wife for about two years after the marriage, thereafter, his ardour cools. With children, the world of reality makes its existence felt.

584 [607] [603] Lead in courtship is also taken by the woman. In such cases she requisitions the services of her obliging sister-in-law or grandmother, who conveys the message of love. The woman does not send presents to win over the man of her choice. Further 833 enquiry regarding the point if lead in coitus is taken by women, revealed that sometimes it happens like [558] that. But should such news leak out, it becomes a subject for jokes and the husband is thought as a worthless fellow, but nothing particular is thought 554 about the girl. The girl who forces her company 192 on men or belongs to many husbands is called a "dàri" by the Santals. The boy who likes the company of women rather too much is termed "Hiròm," and a flirt is called "Khildu". The licentious fellow, who cohabits with many women is censured as a "Candal."

• 152 834 We enquired to find out if the Santals are jealous by nature or not. It transpired that ordinarily the Santals do not suspect anything wrong if their women-folk talk or mix with other men on business or in course of social rounds. But human nature

B Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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being as it is, intimacy is never left unwatched and unquestioned. Their wives and daughters may dance with any Santal at day time, but at night no decent girl will dance except in the company of her father or husband It is only the flirt, the divorcee or the widow who dances unaccompanied by their elders. Some Santals asserted that wives should dance with their husbands only and never with others, but enquiry revealed that custom lays down no such strict injunction and married couples may dance together or with different partners, but there is the sane restriction that the husband must be present at the dancing-yard. It was stated that the husband and wife may suspect each other if either of them dances with others. So business, relationship and bonafides play their reasonable part in determining whether suspicion should attach to the movements of men and women and if the reasons why two persons of the opposite sexes are meeting together are clear, Santal men and women do not bother their heads with any jealous speculation.

Sexual freedom with the Santals has its own border-line. In course of the previous chapters we have seen that the unmarried boy and girl are sexually free, provided that they do not violate the laws of exogamy and prohibited degrees. So it happens that should a lad be found cohabiting, say, with five girls, he will be simply asked by his elders to make

N Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1952
AW42 Santal AW42
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movement of Venus), should better be left to psychoanalysis. 833

Now the problem is, if the continual gratification of the desires dulls the edge of passion and transforms it into a lust. Is the sex-consciousness not impaired thus or does it remain generous, spontaneous and romantic? What we could gather from younger and middle-aged Santals seems to lead to the inference that the erotic life of the Santal is full of joy upto his fortieth year in the minimum and fiftieth in the maximum. Added to this love adventures, as in dances and jungles, give him the keenest delight. 833 152

Older Santals however, striking a different note, told us that joy in coitus remains till three children are born. Thereafter "they cannot shake the loins well". According to them abundant sexual energy comes at twenty years and it does not leave one, till one's thirty-fifth year. They agreed that those who commit lôtghôti (illicit sexual intercourse) receive extreme joy from their adventures. On the point of virility, they opined that those who can eat two seers of rice at a sitting are more capable in the sexual act. Ordinarily, Santals cannot afford more than half-a-seer of rice at a meal. [262]

As regards the repercussions on the emotions of the Santals should they be refused by girls when sexually approached, we gathered that normally the 152 832

St Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Samal AW42
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152 832 youth who proposes a mating and is refused does not mind it seriously. It seems that another successful intrigue would cure the temporary disappointment. But should the boy who proposes, be in real love with the girl, he feels shocked and many such cases end in tragedies. One such concrete case was mentioned to us by some old Santals as having occurred at Jorku, Baripada, where a lad in love with [1962] a married girl asked her to leave the village. She having refused, the boy committed suicide by hanging. 831 We closely questioned educated Santals to find out experiences of a deeper character. But all that we gathered was that ties of the heart apparently very deep, slacken with time and life-long devotion to the lover or beloved, should the lovers be compelled to marry others, is rarely to be found. 831 An educated Santal told us a 588 story of a love-affair between two prohibited clans viz. Tudus and Besras. He said that his cousin (a Tudu) married a Besra girl because he was in love, not minding the antagonism of the society. The lover declared that he would defy death for the sake of the girl. But the romance was shortlived. The girl did not live long. She died and the customary belief that such marriages are unlucky, had its triumph.

831 Whatever that may be, we consider it almost a reflection upon human nature that there are no

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CHAPTER 12

DEATH

761 It is far easier to describe the actions of the Santals in the face
•152 of death than to reduce their beliefs concerning death and the destiny of man's soul to any system. Under the stress of bereavement the behaviour of the men is stoical, in somewhat marked contrast to the behaviour of the majority of the peoples among whom they live. The women, however, give full vent to the expression of their grief and voice their lamentations in
764 words that are poetical in form and content. As soon as a death has occurred, preparations are made for the burning. Cremation is the almost universal rule, although there are certain signi-
766 ficant exceptions. Children who die before puberty are buried with little ceremony in shallow graves on the edge of the forest, and though thorns are placed over the grave to protect the body from wild animals, such graves are often disturbed. Men and women who have died from certain diseases are buried in the same manner, a fact that accounts for the often unsavoury condition of the patch of jungle that adjoins the compound of the Mission Hospital at Sarenga. This is particularly true of those
[164] who die from tuberculosis, which is known to the Santals as *khok' ajar*, or "cough fever", and leprosy, which is called the "great disease". When deaths occur in the village from these causes or from some other infectious disease such as smallpox, the living avoid contact with the dead bodies as far as possible. The body of the dead person is fastened to a rude stretcher made with *sarjom* saplings, and the stretcher is then yoked to a pair of bulls which drag it out of the village. There the body is left after a token burial with a few handfuls of earth, and the task of corpse
764 disposal is left to the vultures and jackals. In some villages
[184] burial is the custom because of the difficulty of obtaining sufficient firewood.

[624] In the usual course of events the *godet'* goes through the village calling on every house to contribute its share of the wood for the burning. From each house one of the men takes a stick for the burning to the bereaved home, while one of the women takes along a small amount of oil and turmeric for anointing the body, and, if the dead person be a married woman, some vermilion in addition. When all have gathered, the corpse is washed and rubbed all over with the oil and turmeric; in the case of a married woman fresh vermilion is put on her forehead and in

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797 798 621 626 The attitude of the community towards the family or the individual who has become Christian is a complex of tolerance and incomprehension. Becoming a Christian is not in itself an offence for which there is an established penalty in tribal custom: the village council does not act and there is no formal outcasting of the offender from the community as there is, for example, when a Santal has married outside the tribe. The denial of tobacco and drinking water, two of the common manifestations of "separateness", are rarely used in the area, though sometimes found elsewhere. Thus, in the early days of the mission at Benagaria, Skrefsrud found that Christian converts were being cut off from social intercourse; by a process that sounds very like intimidation he invited all the leading Santals of the neighbourhood to a feast with the converts and informed them that having eaten with the converts they must now receive them back into the tribe.[1] Where social ostracism does occur it does not last long. There is rarely any need for a family to change their residence on becoming Christian so far as their fellow villagers are concerned, though some Christians do so because there are occasions when an isolated Christian family is put to grave inconvenience. This is particularly the case when a death occurs, for [764] the non-Christians will have nothing whatever to do with the disposal of a corpse after the strange manner of the Christians. Such predicaments occur only when the degree of isolation is great. With the individual convert it happens sometimes that he has to eat his meals separately from the rest of the family • [152] for a time. It is served to him out in the courtyard rather than on the veranḍah or in the house, but this signifies contempt rather than any other emotion and it does not last. Sometimes the members of the family show signs of genuine grief. There is no [582] reason, from a Santal point of view, why non-Christian Santals should not marry Christians, although such marriages are not popular. The chief discouragement to them and the only discipline against them is exercised from the Christian side. And while relations between a convert and his kinsfolk and distant relatives do become strained, the old friendly relations are often resumed and it is customary for Christians to pay visits to the homes of non-Christian relations and *vice versa*. No attempt is made to dispossess or disinherit Christians who continue to enjoy the fruits of their toil in the fields.

797 798 This tolerance of Christians in the midst alongside the dis-

[127] [1] My authority for this statement is a small life of Skrefsrud in Santali, published by the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches.

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CHAPTER 14

THE NEW COMMUNITY

The Santal Christian community is more than an aggregate of individuals who have broken off from the tribe or have been born of parents who did so. It possesses a social life of its own; the individuals and families who compose it have opened their lives to a new influence and with it to a system of ideas that is capable of establishing a pattern of social behaviour distinct from the old. The new pattern will not be different in every respect from the old, which has much of value to contribute and which still exercises a powerful influence in certain directions. By examining the main trends in the present life of one particular community we may not be able to forecast what the pattern will be when Santals in far greater numbers have entered the Church, but we should be able to see the outlines of development in the years immediately ahead.

The great majority of the Santal Christians in the area have retained their status as villagers and cultivators. Their economic interests and activities are the same as those of their non-Christian neighbours. They toil for their daily bread and have to rely on the same aptitudes, skill and intelligent foresight and they earn respect according to the degree in which they display them. They maintain the traditional division of labour between men and women. The men plough the fields and repair their houses; they cut the trees of the forest and cart timber to the railway station. As the long lines of bullock carts enveloped in a cloud of red dust bump over the country roads, one finds here and there in the line a Christian man urging on his pair of bullocks. In bad years when a crowd of men are thronging round the office of the local police station to receive their cultivation loans from the government the Christians take their turn with the rest. The women do the work of the house and take the customary share in the cultivation of the fields and in the food-gathering activities of the village women. The men play their part in the annual hunts and the heads of the household sit with the rest of the villagers in the councils of the village and the tribe.

In spite of the common interests and activities which bind the villagers together irrespective of religious allegiance, the Santal Christian is immediately aware of certain tensions which issue progressively in a breaking away from the old way of life.

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794 The most important cause of tension is the acceptance of a
779 theology—a new myth, as it may be called—that results in a
177 new ordering of religious activities and social obligations. The
178 shadowy figure of the Supreme Being is invested with person-
ality and comes into the centre of consciousness. He is not merely
[152] the Creator to whom little is ascribed except a vague reference as
the dispenser of good and bad weather; He is vitally concerned
with human conduct. The stories of Genesis are grafted on to
conceptions that are already held and affect the latter. The story
of the Jews is appreciated as that of a people who suffered
through a long history from oppression, and the story of the
wanderings appeals to the Santal. It is altogether fitting that the
One Saviour of all mankind should be born of a people with whom
the Santal feels that he has much in common. The traditional
story of the origin of mankind is held to supplement the biblical
narrative. In preaching, the Santal constantly refers to Adam
and Eve as *Pilcu Haram* and *Pilcu Budhi*; *Marak Buru*, on the
other hand, is equated with Satan, and the cult of worship that he
instituted is regarded as a deception imposed on the Santals. To
the Santal who has been led in any degree to appreciate the
Christian teaching about God, the identification of *Marak Buru*
with Satan seems to be obvious. He led the first human pair into
sin and revealed to them the secret of sexual intercourse, for
which the polite name among the Santals is always *hapic' kami*,
or evil work. He caused their ancestors to wander through the
794 forests and finally foisted on them the cult of the spirits centring
177 in the worship of himself. It follows that there are certain things
178 which a Christian may not do. They are cut off from any activity
that savours of worship of the tribal spirits. They do not con-
tribute in cash or in kind to the offerings associated with the
village festivals. This in turn excludes them from the communal
rejoicing, the dancing and the feasting which take place during
the festivals. At such times they are frequently the only sober
persons in the village. It is impossible to live in a village at the
time of the great Spring and Harvest festivals without becoming
acutely aware of the gulf which divides the Christians from their
794 neighbours, and without realizing that the Christians are them-
177 selves deeply conscious of the gulf. The same is true of the clan
178 sacrifices; but it is interesting to observe that rules of behaviour
614 which are linked with the mythology of the clans still regulate
[151] the conduct of the village Christian to a very large extent. A
[754] Murmu who has a clan taboo against building a house with four
sloping sides to the roof continues to live in the style of house

TRIBAL HERITAGE

794 The second main factor in producing tension is that the
177 Christian becomes a member of a community that is different
178 from the tribal community into which he was born and different
158 from any other within his experience. He may know of one or two Santals who have been influenced by the Bengal form of Vaishnavism and have adopted some strange customs in consequence, and he is familiar with the semi-secret society formed by the *ojha* and his disciples, but neither of these provides any analogy with the society of which he now becomes a member.
794 The preaching of the Christian Faith has been pioneered by
797 European missionaries, and up to the present the direction of the
177 affairs of the Christian Church has remained in the hands of
178 missionaries to a greater extent than in many other parts of
• 152 India. Their apparent superiority tends to make the village Christian belittle his own ideas and institutions. Their superior wealth and beneficence tempt him to rely on their help, and sometimes produce resentment when the help is withheld for a reason which he is quite unable to appreciate, the desire to make him "independent". Furthermore, Santal Christians are linked
794 through the Church with Christians who come from other com-
177 munities. This fusion of diverse elements produces strain at
178 times. There has been no difficulty from the first in taking common meals, and this has safeguarded the witness of the
[264] Sacrament of Holy Communion to the unity of believers in Christ. On the other hand, many Christians shrink from contact with the corpse of a non-Santal Christian. Near the village of Samadi there used to be one household of Christians who were of Bhuiya stock. I was on tour in the area when the
[264] old grandmother died. She was buried in the Christian burial ground, here, as in most villages, a piece of waste-land within the holding of one of the Santal Christians, but none of the local Santal Christians would touch the corpse. The persistence of such ideas varies, one might say, in inverse proportion to the degree of contact which the local community enjoys with other Christians. Samadi is in a far corner of the area and such an incident would not occur nearer to the centre. This can be further illustrated by the fusion that has been
794 gradually taking place in the Christian community through
177 intermarriage. Although the village Christian abhors the thought
178 of intermarriage, a few individuals have ignored the rule of tribal endogamy and have contracted marriages against which there
582 are no Christian sanctions. Those who have done so would not find it possible to continue to live in the village community, and

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they are usually men and women who are already divorced from village life. A Santal who has been educated to University standard and subsequently obtained government employment has already been almost completely detribalized. He has little contact with his kinsfolk after early childhood, and if he chooses to marry a non-Santal wife he is strong enough to ignore the sentiment of other Santals. He has to suffer the knowledge that the majority of the Santal Christians as well as the non-Christians are extremely critical of his action and no longer regard him as one of themselves. It also happens sometimes that boys and girls who have been away from home in the mission boarding schools either persuade their reluctant guardians to agree to mixed marriages or force the issue on the community by their own action. The opposition aroused by such marriages usually abates with the passage of time.

While it is convenient to regard education as the third of the factors producing tension in the life of the Christian community, it is in some senses the key to all the rest. To some extent it has been responsible for strains felt through the whole range of tribal life, and this will become increasingly evident in the future with the spread of education. The problems created in the life of the Christian community are the more acute because its members have been eager to grasp at the advantages that accrue from education. Boys and girls in Christian families are sent to the local village school without any question. Immediately they are brought in touch with a new world. In accordance with government regulations they begin to learn to read and write Bengali. Attempts that have been made to give to Santali a more prominent place in the curriculum are not popular, for it has no commercial value. After completing the course at the village school the majority of the children pass into the life of boarding schools at Sarenga, where they remain for an average period of four years. The majority of the teachers at these schools now are themselves Santals and products of the same community, but the type of life is far removed from that of the village, and Santal culture is at best an "extra". The main emphasis of the schooling, accepted by teachers, parents and boys alike, is that the latter should be fitted for higher education or industrial training. Two-thirds of the pupils are Santals, but their language is banished from the classrooms except for about two periods in the week. Prayers are conducted in Santali alternately with Bengali. Although they are encouraged to learn and practise